



Using a Smartphone for Video Interviewing

The following videoing tips for smartphones will assist you with organising yourself and your environment to capture the best possible footage.

NOTE: Before you begin recording, go into your phone settings and put your phone into airplane mode. This will allow you to film your video without being interrupted by a phone call or text message.

PRACTICE

Before you begin filming, practise what you want to say a few times and time it for length.

ENVIRONMENT

For video interviewing, indoors is always best for the most control of the filming environment.

Light

Filming in a well-lit area will greatly improve the quality of your video, especially indoors. Where possible, have the light in front of you rather than behind you and avoid lighting that produces shadows on your face. Generally speaking, the better the lighting, the better the video.

Here are some basic lighting tips:

- If you're indoors, position yourself so that the windows are facing you. Don't put your back to the window because you'll end up in silhouette.
- Avoid overhead lighting and backlight.
- Don't use your smartphone's flash.
- If you're indoors and there isn't enough natural light, you could position two lamps at 45-degree angles from the front of your face and place your smartphone in the middle.

*Conducting a light check by recording some test footage is always recommended.

Noise and audio recording:

Avoid filming where there is noise. It's important to first find a quiet location to film in. Make sure to position yourself close to your smartphone so that no more than the top half of your body is visible. The farther away you are from your smartphone, the harder it will be to hear and the more ambient noise you will pick up.

Most smartphones come with good built-in microphones but if you want high quality audio, you can buy direct plug-in professional microphones or an adapter that will allow you to use one. *Whether you use the inbuilt microphone on your smartphone or a plug-in one, conducting an audio check by recording some test footage is always recommended.

Background:

Choosing the best background will enhance the quality of your video and avoid any distractions. Avoid flashy patterns and stark colours. Bright colours like yellow, orange, or red can be distracting. Neutral tones like navy blue, light grey and soft white, appear best on video and are easy on the eyes.

It's important to remember that the environment stands out as much as the person on camera. Consider any visual distractions that may be in your environment:

- Are there pets moving around in the background?
- What's on the shelf behind you?

- Is there an echo when you talk (usually in a non-carpeted room)?
- Is there a fan or air-conditioner that you can hear in the background?

If you're going to sit down for the video, use a chair that doesn't swivel or squeak.

CLOTHING

As with the environment, clothing you wear will stand out as much as you do. Here are some quick clothing tips:

- Avoid patterns like stripes.
- Don't wear clothes that blend in with the background.
- Don't wear a shiny outfit.
- Keep accessories like jewellery to a minimum.
- Make sure your accessories don't interfere with the audio.

Shoot Horizontally (Landscape)

Always have your smartphone in a horizontal (landscape) position when filming. A video filmed in landscape format fits well into most social media newsfeeds. Computer monitors, televisions and websites all have landscape-oriented displays. From an aesthetic point of view, videos filmed in landscape are generally more pleasing to watch as they feel more open than portrait position, which can seem claustrophobic.

KEEP YOUR PHONE LEVEL AND STEADY

Keep your phone steady and level while filming by using a tripod or gimbal. Holding your smartphone in your hand will always result in shaky footage.

Using a tripod or gimbal will also help keep your smartphone at eye level.

COMPOSITION, EXPOSURE and FOCUS

Composition:

- Don't keep the camera so close that your face fills up the entire frame.
- If you're talking directly to your audience, look into the camera and position yourself in the centre of the frame, level with your smartphone. A tripod or gimbal will help with this.
- Consider headroom. Typically, you don't want the top of your head leaving the frame. Position yourself close to your smartphone so that no more than the top half of your body is visible.
- Look into the smartphone lens, not at the screen. This is especially important as the smartphone lens is usually to one side, not in the middle of the phone.
- *Always conduct a test-run so that you will be you are looking directly at your audience.*

Exposure and Focus:

Smartphones automatically detect and adjust exposure and focus accordingly so you will most likely not need to do anything in order to achieve a good quality video. It's always a good idea to record some test footage.

If your test footage appears too bright (overexposed) or too dark (underexposed) and out of focus, using manual control will help correct this.

Using the manual control setting:

NOTE: If you are the 'subject' in the video, you will need to ask someone to film for you so they can engage the manual control setting on your smartphone.



Before you start filming, tap on the phone's screen on the subject that you want to focus on, then hold down the focus square that appears, which will hold the subject in place. Everything within that square is in focus and it will stay in focus as long as there is not too much movement by the subject or the smartphone during filming. The focus square also controls the exposure, so locking the focus also locks the exposure.

**If you are filming using natural light and the environment suddenly became brighter or darker, your exposure will not change to correct it.*

DOUBLE CHECK YOUR VIDEO

Always play back your video to make sure that you can hear it clearly and that you're happy with how it looks.

SPECIAL NOTE: Don't use digital zoom

It can be tempting to use the zoom feature on your smartphone to get a closer shot of your subject, but since the lens isn't zooming optically, you're just enlarging the picture digitally. This always results in a pixelated image and the video will appear fuzzy.

REMINDERS

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Always conduct a test recording once you have established all of the above and check for:

- Lighting quality
- Sound quality
- Background
- Composition
- Overall clarity